

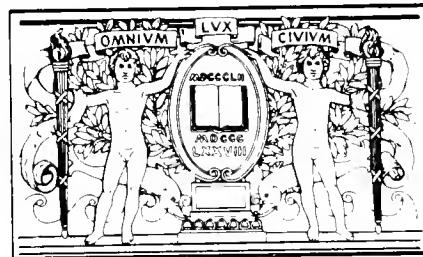
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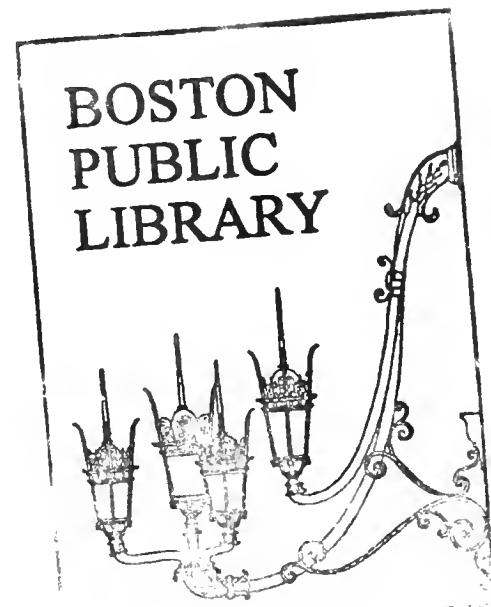
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Summary

# **N** Northeastern University Boston Campus Master Plan

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



**Sasaki Associates, Inc.**

May 1987



# I. INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE

The Campus Master Plan has three basic purposes:

1. Provide an overall physical plan to direct the University's short- and long-term development strategy.
2. Assist the University in identification and prioritization of projects coordinated with fund raising programs.
3. Provide the University with a foundation document that supports individual projects for the public approval process.

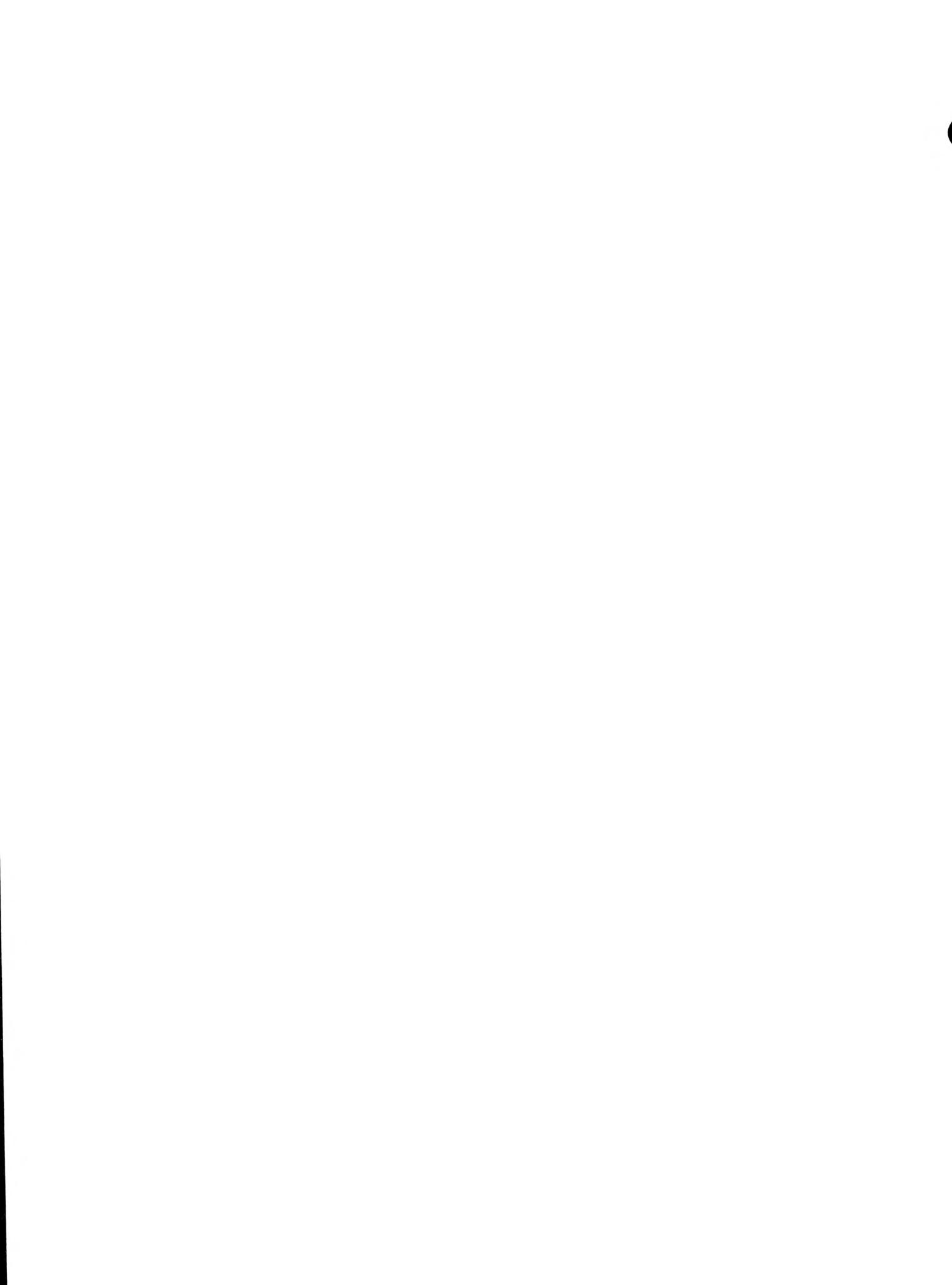
## PROCESS

The Campus Master Plan has been prepared as a result of an interactive process undertaken with the University over the past year. An inventory of existing conditions and trends was documented for a comprehensive list of factors including enrollment, building facilities, traffic and parking, utilities and urban design issues. Alternative plan concepts were then developed to test the accommodation of building program, traffic, site planning and open space options. Numerous work sessions and presentations have taken place with University staff and the Executive Committee, which was formed to review the Campus Master Plan progress. In addition, presentations to the BRA staff have covered the inventory and trends as well as a review of alternatives and the concept for the Campus Master Plan.

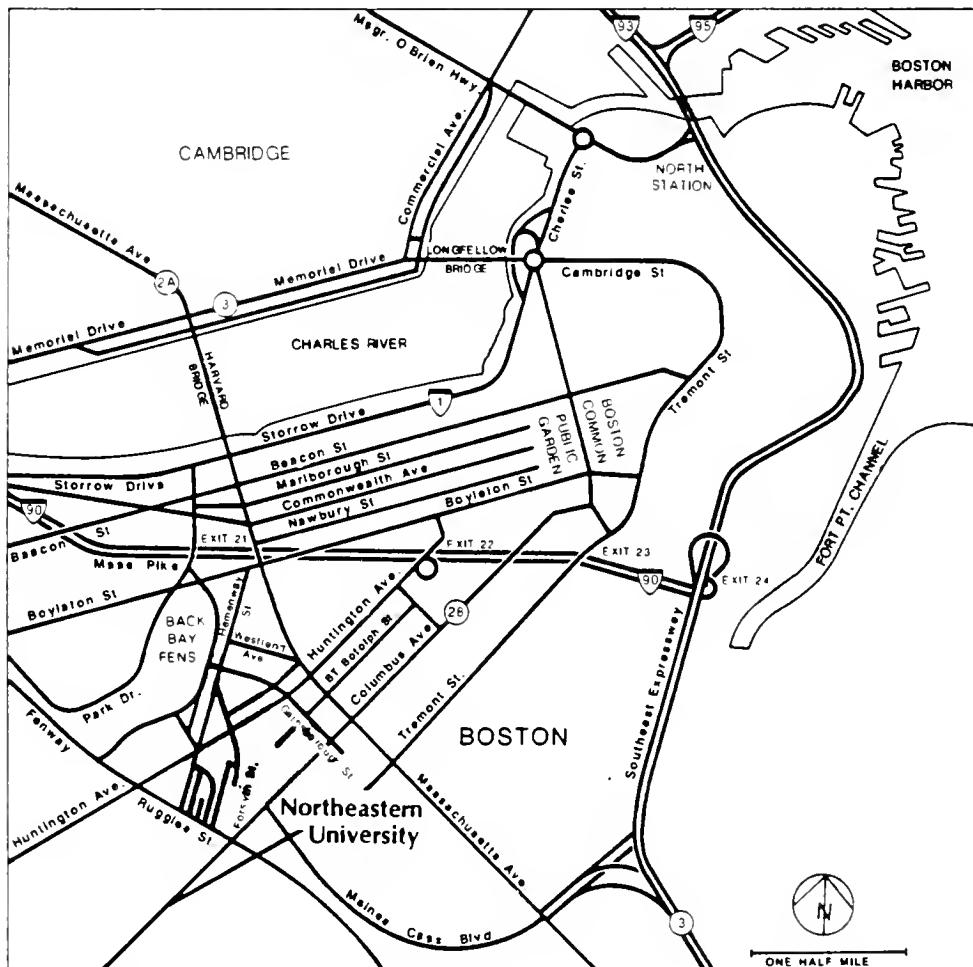
## RECURRENT THEMES

During the course of study undertaken for development of the Campus Master Plan a number of observations of recurrent themes have surfaced upon which basic planning concepts for the campus are founded.

- The University makes do with current physical resources/ facilities which are strained to their limit in accommodating academic programs. These limitations severely restrict growth in critical areas of scholarly research.
- The University faces a period of moderate enrollment decline as opposed to years of growth, creating a window of opportunity with respect to focusing on quality and long-term strategies for development. Facilities such as housing, laboratories and recreation will enhance the strategic goals of greater student retention and broader student recruitment.



- Northeastern University, by sheer mass and size, is a major entity within the urban neighborhood. However, the campus lacks the symbolic or special presence typically associated with major universities.
- Open space and quality pedestrian systems within the campus core are compromised by parking and vehicular traffic.
- Northeastern faces increasing competition for students in the future and should focus on improvements to the campus, educational programs and student services that enhance its competitive position.
- The University is located in an area of Boston that is undergoing rapid change and will continue to change in the near future. This will continue to exert strong external influence on the University through the development of City of Boston redevelopment parcels, neighboring institutional expansion programs and major mass transit facilities.





## II. PLANNING CONCEPTS

The basic concepts upon which the Campus Master Plan is founded address land use organization, phasing and circulation and parking, as follows:

- The plan must strive to create a distinctive, inviting campus setting that reinforces the quality of place at Northeastern University. This is especially important for the University to maintain a competitive edge in attracting a national and international student body.
- The plan must establish a clear organizing framework based on a system of connected pedestrian open spaces. Further, the open space framework should extend to the campus edges at strategic locations to provide connections at important points of entry into the campus.
- The plan must take advantage of the window of opportunity presented by the large and relatively open land resource that exists in the surface parking areas south of Dana and Snell and generally to the west of Leon Street. It is unique in the University's history of rapid growth and the need to make rapid decisions to fit buildings on a lot-by-lot basis, that there is a land resource of sufficient dimension to allow for a comprehensive organizing framework to be established. The impending opening of the Ruggles Street MBTA station provides yet another opportunity to create a new point of entry and organization for the campus.
- The plan should organize future buildings and uses to achieve the maximum early effect in establishing the enhanced organizing framework.
- The plan should concentrate on measures to accomplish a practical, affordable phasing sequence, avoiding significant demolitions for as long as possible, and prioritizing potential acquisitions in order to fulfill certain near-term space needs.
- The plan should provide the ability to rationalize and optimize space use within the campus based upon the goals of maximizing new organizational efficiencies and minimizing external costs.



### III. MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ENROLLMENT

Enrollment at Northeastern University in the fall of 1985 totalled just over 35,000 students (including both full- and part-time students), comprised of some 30,000 undergraduates and 5,000 graduate students. Unlike the rapid enrollment growth experienced during the 1960's and 1970's, enrollment has declined over the last few years with an 11% drop experienced overall from 1981-1985. Some enrollment decline is expected to continue through 1993 at Northeastern University with a modest recovery in enrollments toward the year 2000. Enrollment declines are anticipated mainly due to the decreasing pool of high school graduates projected through the next decade. Thus, Northeastern University faces the challenge of capturing an increasing percentage of the potential student pool and expanding their geographic range of the student market. To maintain its competitive advantage, the University must continue to provide quality educational programs that have traditionally attracted students to the University, student housing opportunities and improved recreational facilities.

The anticipated decrease in overall enrollment, while providing a potentially constraining factor to program development, also provides the University with a window of opportunity in terms of longer term strategic planning and facility development. During this period, planning and design of new facilities and programs, can be accomplished in a coherent framework without focusing on the substantial short-term new facility demands caused by rapid enrollment growth. In summary, the University can emphasize quality and compatibility with a longer term vision for the campus.

#### ACADEMIC SPACE AND STUDENT SERVICES

Northeastern University utilizes its current academic and student services facilities at levels that can be termed extraordinary. Operating from early morning through evening classes, classrooms have a utilization rate of 96% of available hours. To facilitate a more appropriate utilization of facilities as well as providing for new educational programs, research and student services, the following projects have been included within the Campus Master Plan to meet the needs of the University in the near-term (five years) and in the long-term.

- Resource Center - The functional and symbolic center of campus, the new Resource Center is planned for 240,000 gsf providing for all traditional library functions, research support, study space and long-term stack space needs. This project is of high priority.



- College of Engineering/Sciences - Located just to the south of Snell and Dana to maximize affinities between the engineering disciplines and the sciences, this high priority project recommends 120,000 gsf of new facilities which are predominantly comprised of laboratories with office and classroom space also provided.
- College of Business Administration - Recommended for use of the Dodge Building (once the new Resource Center is completed); long-term option for construction of a new building (110,000 gsf) is acommodated by the campus plan.
- Performing Arts Center - Provides for theatre performances and academic needs as a long-term project.
- Academic Buildings - Provides for long-term demands for additional academic space. These facilities have been located within the fabric of the campus plan in a manner that provides suitable sites for academic growth beyond the year 2000.

#### UNIVERSITY HOUSING

Provision for student housing has become increasingly important to attracting and retaining students. The Campus Master Plan recognizes this fact and establishes a goal of 550 new student beds in the near-term (1990) with a total of 1,500 new beds in the long-term. This would increase the current 4,000 students housed by the University to a total of 5,500. New housing is located to achieve both vital and high quality housing environments. A mix of housing types (apartment, suites, dormitories, etc.) is provided for in response to a variety of student lifestyles. A housing sector has been sited in the west portion of the campus to establish an appropriate campus edge and activity center. Acquisition and renovation of the Boston YMCA will provide an increase of 150 beds. Housing north of Huntington Avenue has been located in a manner that is compatible with the existing scale and fabric of the Fenway area.

#### ATHLETICS AND RECREATION

The dense urban environment within which Northeastern is located, demands the provision of facilities for a wide-range of intensive indoor recreational activities. Planned increases in student housing also generates demand for both programmed activities and informal play. The plan has provided for a new recreation center/schoolboy track across the Southwest Corridor from the main campus core, that will provide for intensive indoor activity needs. This allows the overutilized Cabot/Barletta facilities to be focused on instruction and team practice. The recommended open space system for the campus will also provide increased opportunity for informal outdoor play and gathering places which are highly constrained on campus today.



## OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE

The open space system planned for the campus forms the essential structure and organization to campus. Additionally, it functions as the major routes of pedestrian movement and provides aesthetic relief to the densely built environment within and surrounding the campus. A major east-west open space mall is recommended anchored at the new Resource Center and provides a direct and easily perceived connection across Forsyth Street and through the campus providing the opportunity to link to adjacent institutions such as Wentworth Institute and the Museum of Fine Arts. Priority building program elements (Resource Center, College of Engineering/Sciences) will allow the University to form a major increment of the open space mall within the near-term. To successfully achieve the open space mall alignment, the University must be committed to the maintenance of essential open space dimensions in the placement and design of new buildings and the closing of internal streets under discussion.

Landscape elements are planned to reinforce the organization and quality of the campus open space system as well as providing identifiable elements along streets that form current campus edges (Huntington Avenue, Ruggles Street, Forsyth Street, Parker Street and Columbus Avenue) and entry points. Within the campus, a series of courtyards and memorable spaces such as the Quad, LeBeau Park, the new courtyard adjacent to the Resource Center and the new entry area adjacent to Ruggles Street MBTA station, are opportunities to evoke special character and quality to the Northeastern University campus. Strategic elimination of parking and vehicular circulation from internal campus areas is also proposed in part, to allow a quality open space system to develop.

## CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Northeastern is located in an area of heavy cross-town commuter traffic which causes congestion on the street system especially on the current western edge of campus. In its existing alignment, Ruggles Street presents the greatest difficulty for traffic movement necessitating the proposed future improvements to two travel lanes in each direction to provide for an adequate increase in capacity. The Campus Master Plan attempts to direct access and egress to the campus (and parking facilities) along routes that avoid severely congested roadways and do not penetrate into the campus core.



Forsyth Street, currently the main campus entry road, will be downgraded in the long term to provide access to the Ruggles Street MBTA station and University visitor parking and service drives. Campus traffic will be directed to the parking areas located on the periphery of campus via Columbus Avenue, Parker Street and Camden Street (north of the Orange Line). Creation of new academic space may help to improve traffic movement to campus by providing an opportunity to distribute the peak demand times more broadly. In summary, campus traffic will be rerouted along the campus edges to parking areas rather than through the internal campus area as presently occurs.

The Campus Master Plan recognizes that the University must continue to provide adequate parking for commuting students and staff. The plan recommends maintaining the current supply of some 3,300 parking spaces, the vast majority of which will ultimately be provided within parking garages. The plan also recognizes the major improvements to mass transit access to campus with the relocated Orange Line along the Southwest Corridor. To that end, the University should keep a watchful eye on ridership trends to document if any material effect on parking demand is forthcoming from the mass transit improvements.

The parking strategy for the Campus Master Plan has three basic elements:

- Locate the bulk of parking in parking garages on the campus periphery and minimize all but service and visitor parking within the campus core.
- Provide a geographically balanced parking supply that responds to commuting student origins and street system constraints.
- Provide structured parking (only when necessary), in increments that are cost effective (minimum 300 spaces).

All new building projects on campus beyond the Resource Center construction, will require parking space replacement because existing surface parking lots will be built upon. The plan prioritizes the acquisition of the Uptown Garage to provide a near-term net increase (300+) in parking spaces with no impact on the current land resource or surface parking supply. This will allow additional high priority academic projects to be built (Engineering) without construction of a new garage on campus. In essence this defers the commitment of scarce campus land resources until a future date when the benefits of an additional five years of trend analysis and planning can be considered.



## IV. PHASING

Phasing for the Campus Master Plan is based on four overall strategies:

1. Accommodate high priority needs in the near-term phase in concert with The Century Fund fundraising objectives.
2. Retain the current land use west of Forsyth Street to the extent possible through the near-term phase.
3. Prioritize aquisitions that provide for net increases in physical plant and defer required demolitions to later phases of the plan.
4. Defer construction of new parking structures until the mid to long-term phase.

### CORE CONSOLIDATION

This initial phase targets the five-year planning horizon for implementation. Of highest priority is the completion of the Resource Center. Once the Resource Center is operational, it allows Dodge Library to be reprogrammed as academic space for the immediate needs of the College of Business Administration. Independent of the Resource Center in terms of timing, new College of Engineering/Science facilities are included within the near-term phase. Based on the outcome final results of subsurface vibration analysis for the proposed site south of Dana/Snell, the University should maintain the option for engineering program needs to redevelop the Forsyth Building site. The timing of this option, however, would be dependent on the completion of the Library Center prior to initiation.

Student housing expansion by 550 new beds is proposed in the near-term by construction on the current site of the Opera parking lot and aquisition of the YMCA. Parking supply is maintained at current levels through the near-term phase by aquiring the Uptown Garage (300+ spaces) and providing replacement parking under the proposed housing on Opera lot.

### CAMPUS EXPANSION

Targeted through a five- to ten-year horizon, mid-term projects include additional academic space (option: new College of Business Administration building) west of Forsyth Street, student housing (450+ beds) accommodated adjacent to the West Apartments and construction of a recreation center/schoolboy track on Columbus Lot (a joint project with the State). Replacement parking, to maintain supply at current levels, is provided by the first phase (approximately 500 spaces) of a parking garage located along Ruggles Street.

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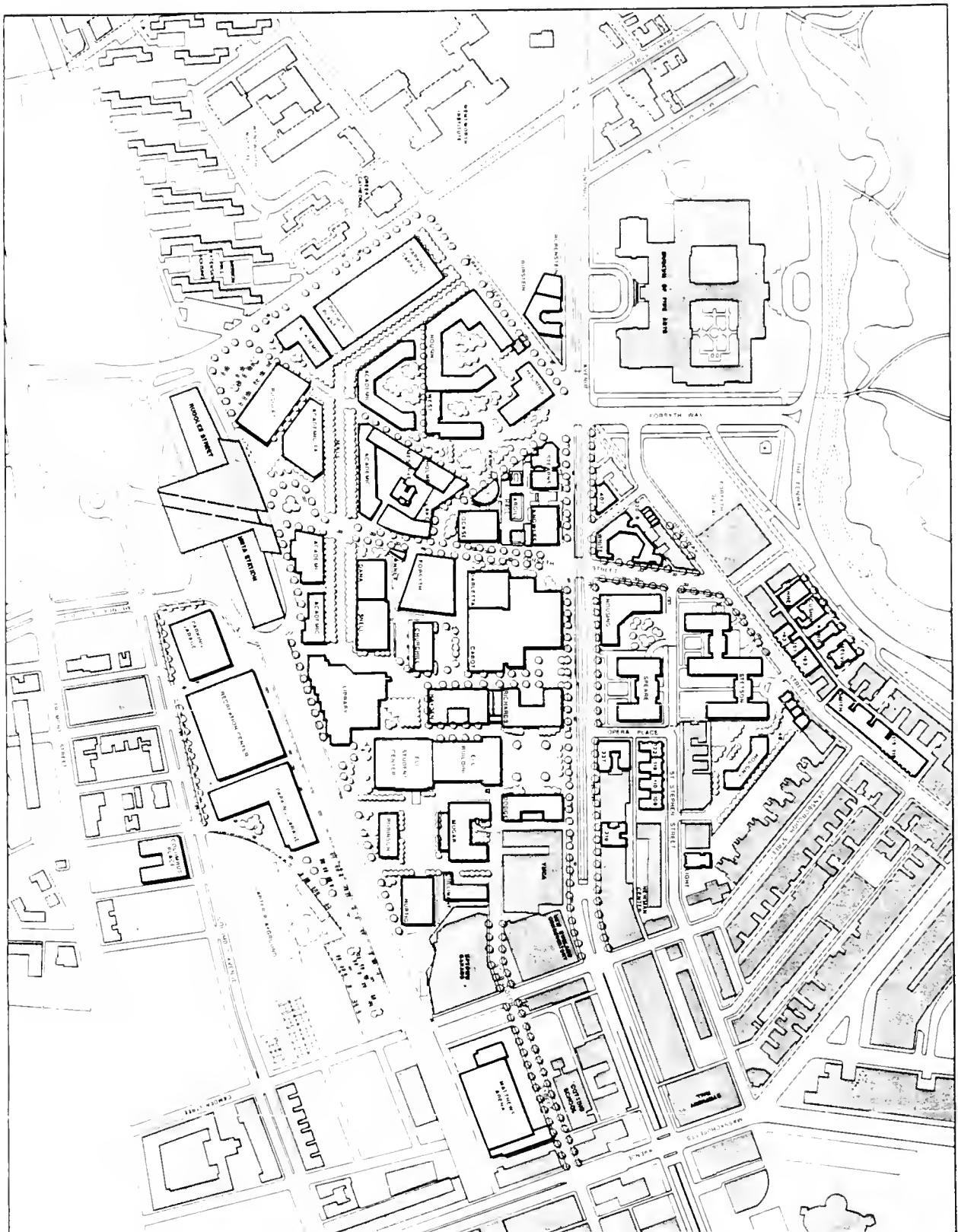
### CAMPUS MATURITY

Long-term projects, beyond the ten-year planning phase, include additional academic facilities in the western sector of campus, a Performing Arts Center located in proximity to the Ruggles building, redevelopment of the Forsyth building site and demolition of the Forsyth Annex. Additional student housing (totalling 500+ beds) is accommodated on North Lot and by expansion of the housing complex established around the West Apartments. Demolitions required as a result of the long-term plan phase include Forsyth Annex, Parker Building, 26 Tavern Road and the African American Institute building. The plan provides for on-campus replacement space for all of these facilities through new construction and/or reprogrammed facilities. Parking supply is maintained at current levels with the construction of the final phase (approximately 500 spaces) of a parking garage at Ruggles Street and subsequently a parking structure (up to 400 spaces) adjacent to the Recreation Center on Columbus Lot.

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CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

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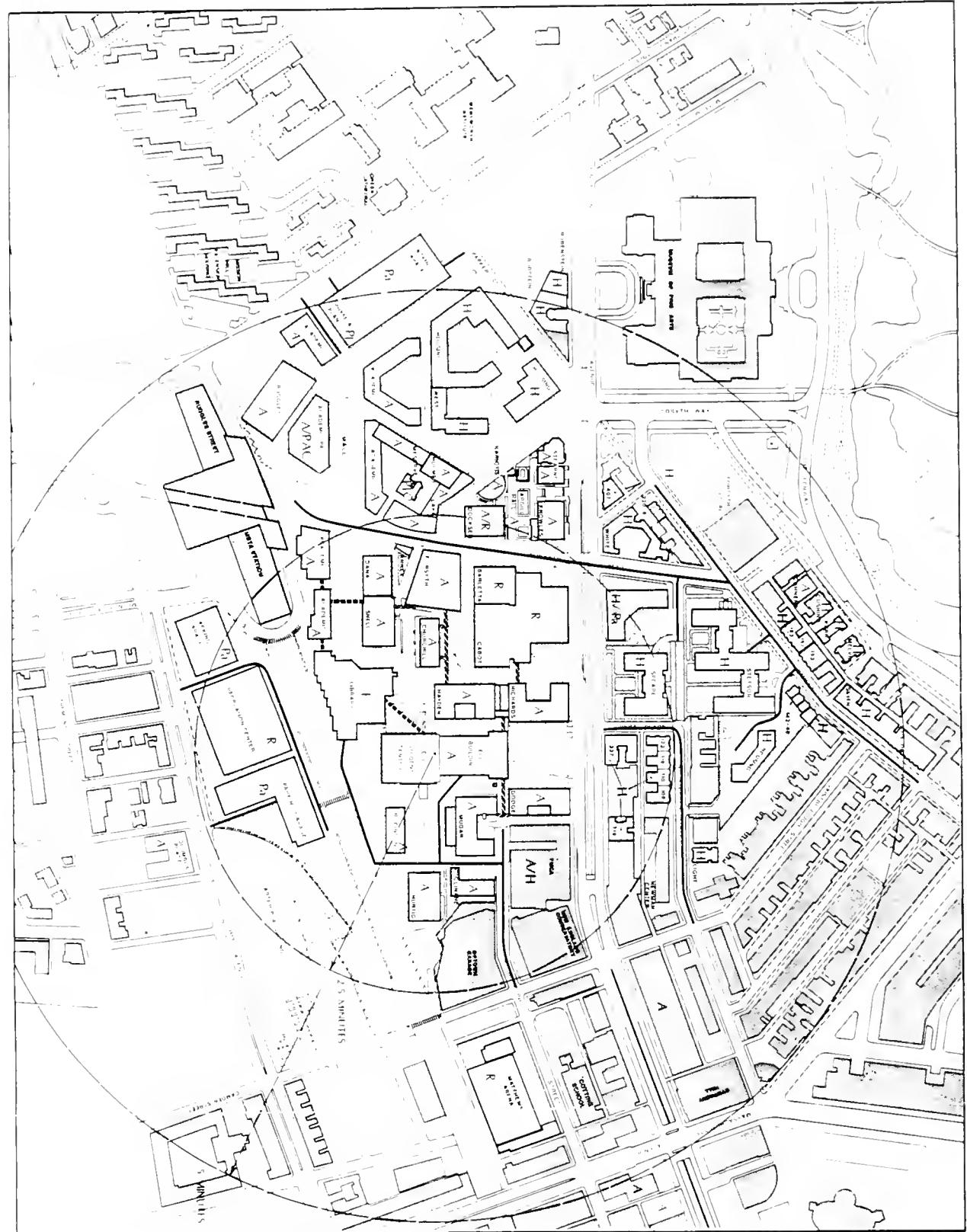
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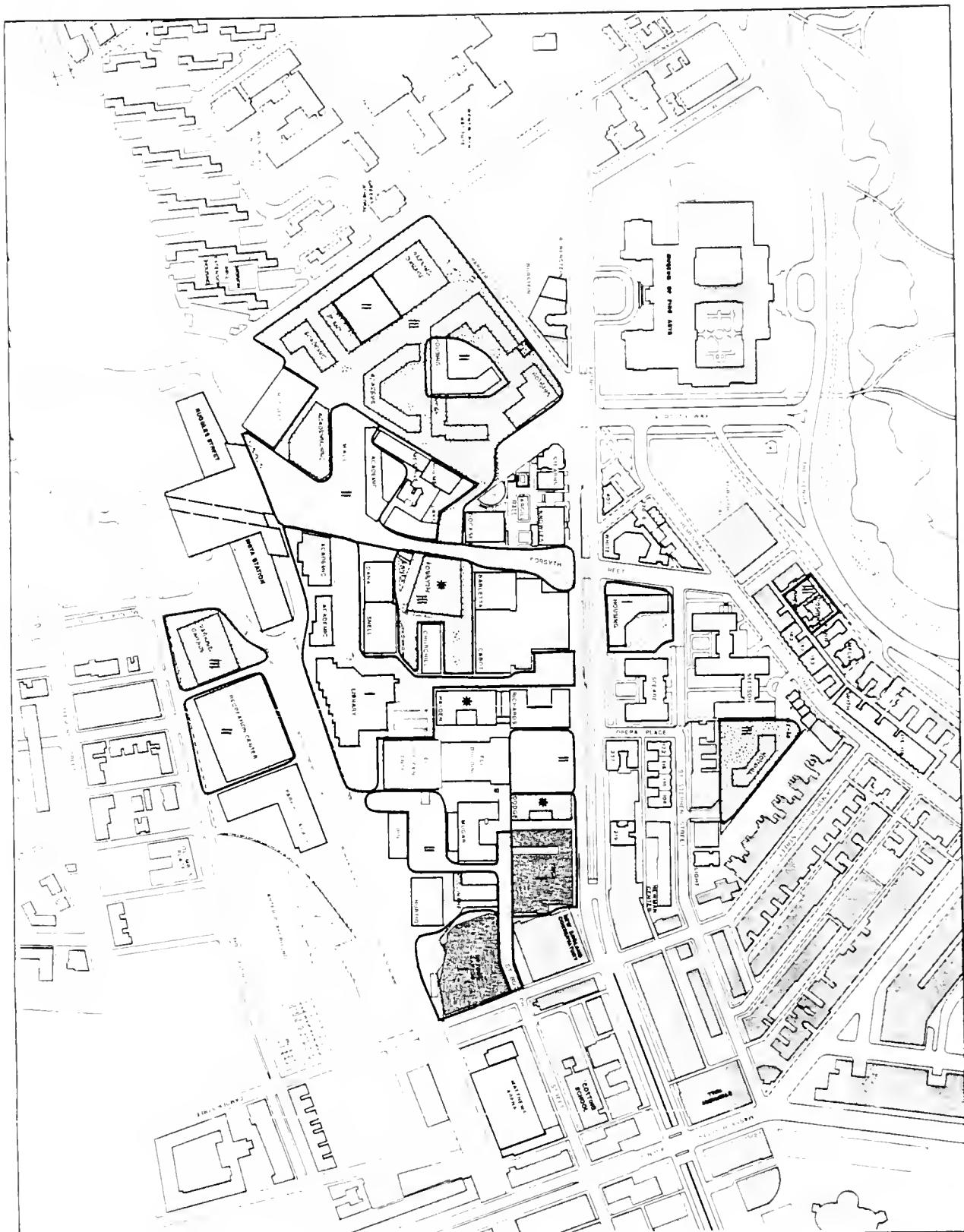
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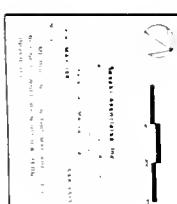




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CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

PHASING PLAN

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